



A Chinese Party Card

Joining the Party

Attached are two documents. One is the SACP's advice, given on its web site, but slightly edited, as to how to join. The other document is the SACP's application form. Let us hope that you are already through the process of joining the SACP, because it can be full of pitfalls. One reason for studying it as a process is so that one can assist others to come through successfully, and in good time.

Apart from the difficulty of joining the Party, one may also take a critical view of the "duties" and the "pillars" as described on the SACP web page, because for the purposes of this course, we need to develop an integrated (i.e. "concrete") understanding of the nature and the purpose of the Party, of the ANC and of COSATU and its affiliates.

The SACP is a vanguard Party, not by claim, or by inheritance, but only by virtue of study. What we call "political education" is not merely a re-telling of the laid-down nature of the existing Party, but it is the very essence of the process that the Party is engaged in.

There is no higher authority than the Party that could award it the franchise of revolution. Nor does the Party gain its leading role by competitively destroying the efforts of others. From the beginning, for example in the Communist Manifesto of 1848, the communists have said they would not do that. The communists do not claim any kind of monopoly.

The foundation is study

It follows that whatever role the Party may play is founded upon nothing else than study. It is because we study that we are able to see the whole picture, if we can at all. It is because we study that we are able to see beyond our immediate self-interest, whereas the mass organisations are less well equipped to do so. The mass organisations are based on simple, mutual, sectional self-interest.

This is what distinguishes the mass organisations from the vanguard Party. The mass organisations, including trade unions, rest on the immediate self-perceived self-interest of the participants, and this is how it should be.

The Party encourages people to organise democratically, according to their lights, even though limited in the first place to common self-interest.

It is we as the Party who have made ourselves professionally responsible, by virtue of study, for being able to see wider than immediate self-interest of sections, towards the best interests of the whole society.

Therefore Party membership becomes an obligation to study, because, other than what is gained by study, the Party has no

rights whatsoever. If you are not prepared to study and to continue studying, then you have no business to be joining the Communist Party.

Not a numbers game

Nobody is compelled to be a communist. Nor is it crucial that there are very large numbers of communists. The numbers that are required are those that are sufficient to maintain the Party's country-wide mission to educate, organise and mobilise; and no more.

The Party does not set out to “convert” the whole population. The Party does not, for example, set out to convert every sports club into a political cell. To the extent that a Party member has a communist duty in a sports club, it would be, firstly, to help make it a better sports club, and then, perhaps, a more democratic one; but not to try to annex it to the communist party.

In the next part of this course we will look more deeply into the necessity for mass democratic organisation. We will draw out further, the distinction between, and the functional organic relation between, the democratic mass organisations and their vanguard Party of professional revolutionaries.

The work of communists in any country is done outside their Party, among non-communists.

- The above is to introduce an original reading-text: [How to join the Party; SACP application form](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).